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Ambassador McCormick's Remarks at the 2007 United States New Zealand Partnership Forum in Auckland,

I would like to add my thanks to the Co Chairs of the Forum – Jim Bolger and Mike Moore, Clayton Yeutter, and Tom Vilsack for guiding our discussions so wisely – and occasionally firmly – over the past day and a half.

The success of the April 2006 Forum left me wondering if in Auckland, we would be able to top its creativity and enthusiasm. As we have seen, the NZ-US Council under Stephen Jacobi's leadership and the US-NZ Council under John Mullen have built on that great start. This year's Forum has been even more of an accomplishment – both relevant and thought-provoking.

The rapport between delegates and the sometimes robust exchange of ideas which we have witnessed bode well for the future. As Assistant Secretary Hill reminded us yesterday, these discussions should be seen in the context of a steadily advancing relationship between the United States and New Zealand.

Even in the period since the last Forum we have seen an unprecedented improvement in both communication and concrete accomplishments between our two countries on a range of political and economic issues. I am very confident that these improvements will continue.

I believe the Forum's choice of the twin themes of Partnership and Innovation was inspired, because it allows us to focus both on what is best about our relationship, and what still needs attention.

We have all talked and heard a lot about the fundamental values which our two great nations share. It is vitally important that we acknowledge and nurture those links – particularly in a wider world where, it is often easy to forget the shared commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and the market economy all too often are *not* the norm.

Sharing core values does not mean we will always agree on 'everything'. We can continue to have differences of opinion on those subjects which are close both to our hearts and yours, but still remain firm friends. Partnerships flourish between our citizens on every level, from everyday vacation travel and business ventures, to our common effort to promote stability in the Pacific and our counter-terrorism effort in Afghanistan. It is the job of all of us here to build on these partnerships, to help keep our friendship alive.

And just as innovation is the cornerstone to success in so many areas, we must also constantly work at innovating and improving our dealings with each other. Perhaps it is our shared pioneer heritage which encourages us to seize opportunities, regardless of how difficult or distant the prize may seem.

Great and enduring friendships survive when both work through the difficult subjects but also take the time to celebrate what is shared. The United States-New Zealand Partnership Forum allows us to do both these, so I commend all those who have been involved in progressing our enduring friendship.

Thank you.